

Message Text

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15/13

ACTION EA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 15227

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 6)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS VS

SUBJ: MILITARY ACTIVITY AND PROSPECTS IN MR-3

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION IMMEDIATE SAIGON FROM BIEN HOA 09 DEC
REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO.

QUOTE

BIEN HOA 625

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, VS

SUBJECT: MILITARY ACTIVITY AND PROSPECTS IN MR3

REF: BIEN HOA 624

1. SUMMARY. WITH THE NVA/VC 1974-75 DRY SEASON CAMPAIGN NOW
UNDERWAY, THE SITUATION NORTHEAST OF TAY NINH CITY APPEARS
STABILIZED FOR THE MOMENT WITH TERRITORIAL FORCES PERFORMING
EXTREMELY WELL. FURTHER HEAVY ATTACKS IN TAY NINH CAN BE PRE-
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DICTED. HEAVY ATTACKS BY THE 7TH AND 9TH NVA DIVS IN OTHER

AREAS CAN ALSO BE PREDICTED IN THE COMING WEEKS, WITH CU CHI AND TRANG BANG ON ROUTE 1 IN NORTHERN HAU NGHIA LIKELY TARGETS. PHU GIAO IN NORTHEAST BINH DUONG PROVINCE AND THE HOAI DUC AREA OF BINH TUY PROVINCE ARE OTHER LIKELY MAIN FORCE TARGETS. SAPPER ATTACKS CAN BE EXPECTED IN BOTH NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN BIEN HOA PROVINCE AS WELL AS IN THE ENVIRONS OF SAIGON. FREQUENT ROAD INTERDICTIONS ON THE MAIN ARTERIES SHOULD BE EXPECTED. THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ATTACK BY THE 5TH DIV ON THE WESTERN BORDER OF HAU NGHIA AND LONG AN PROVINCES IS NOT TO BE EXCLUDED. END SUMMARY.

2. IN THE HEAVY NVA/VC ATTACKS AT SUOI DA AND BA DEN MOUNTAIN, DESCRIBED REFTTEL, TERRITORIAL FORCES HAVE GIVEN BETTER THAN THEY HAVE TAKEN, SUFFERING ONLY LIGHT CASUALTIES WHILE INFLECTING AN ESTIMATED 200 KIA ON COMMUNIST FORCES IN THE PERIOD FROM FRIDAY NIGHT TO MONDAY MORNING. NO DAMAGE HAS BEEN REPORTED TO EQUIPMENT AT THE GVN BASE ATOP NUI BA DEN. AT SUOI DA ALONE, RF TROOPS COUNTED MORE THAN 100 BODIES OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER AND THE COUNT IS EXPECTED TO INCREASE SUBSTANTIALLY WHEN NVA CASUALTIES INFLECTED BY AIR AND ARTILLERY BEYOND THE PERIMETER FENCE CAN BE COUNTED. TWO NVA PRISONERS CAPTURED AT SUOI DA FIRST SAID THEY WERE FROM THE 7TH DIV BUT UNDER FURTHER INTERROGATION DECLARED THEY WERE FROM THE 205TH REGT. JUDGMENT ON THE POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS IS BEING RESERVED PENDING RELIEF OF THE GARRISON AT SUOI DA AND INTERROGATION BY EXPERIENCED INTELLIGENCE EXPERTS. RF TROOPS AT SUOI DA HAVE CAPTURED INTACT AN UNUSUAL ARTILLERY PIECE WHICH THEY DESCRIBE AS HAVING A "LONG TUBE" BUT WHICH OTHERWISE THEY CANNOT POSITIVELY IDENTIFY.

3. AT ONE POINT DURING DEC 7, VC WERE INSIDE SUOI DA VILLAGE BUT WERE SUBSEQUENTLY DRIVEN OUT. GROUND ASSAULTS CONTINUED THERE RELENTLESSLY DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS DEC 8. MR3 COMMANDER, LTG DONG, TOLD ME THIS MORNING THAT SPOTTER L-19S OPERATED WHEN THE NVA/VC CARRIED OUT RE-SUPPLY OPERATIONS BETWEEN ASSAULTS AND THAT FRIENDLY AIR WERE THUS SHOWN GOOD TARGETS WHERE NVA FORCES WERE CONCENTRATED.

4. PHUOC HOI HAMLET BETWEEN TAY NINH AND SUOI DA WAS STILL OCCUPIED BY NVA/VC FORCES THE MORNING OF DEC 9, BUT GVN TERRITORIAL FORCES WERE AT BOTH THE SOUTHWEST AND NORTHEASTERN EDGES OF THE HAMLET ON ROUTE 13. IT WAS NEAR PHOC HOI ON DEC 8 THAT AN ARVN BATTALION
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MINUS (2ND BATTALION, 49TH REGT, 25TH DIV) MOVING TO THE RELIEF OF SUOI DA AND PHUOC HOI OUTPOSTS WAS BADLY HURT BY AN NVA AMBUSH AND ARTILLERY BARRAGE. THE BATTALION WAS TEMPORARILY ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER EFFECTIVE ACTION WITH A REPORTED 11 KIA, 32 WIA, AND ABOUT 45 MIA. TERRITORIAL FORCES IN OR NEAR THE SAME ACTION APPEAR TO HAVE HELD STEADY.

5. A LARGER QUESTION AT THIS JUNCTURE IS WHETHER, WHEN AND

WITH WHAT FORCES THE NVA WILL CONTINUE THE ASSAULT NORTH AND NORTH-EAST OF TAY NINH CITY. ON PAST PERFORMANCE, IT WOULD BE UNLIKELY THAT THE COMMUNISTS WOULD FAIL TO FOLLOW UP WITH SUSTAINED HEAVY ATTACKS, AND SPECULATION CURRENTLY CENTERS ON WHAT FORCE THEY WOULD SEND AGAINST SUOI DA OR OTHER GVN OUTPOSTS NORTH OF TAY NINH CITY WITH THE 205TH NOW SO BADLY HURT. ONE POSSIBILITY BEING CONSIDERED IS THAT THE 201ST REGT, WHICH HAS BEEN IN THE AN LOC AREA FOR MANY MONTHS, MAY HAVE MOVED TO TAY NINH TO COME IN BEHIND THE 205TH. MR3 HQ IS ALSO CLOSELY WATCHING ROUTE 22 NORTHWEST FROM TAY NINH CITY TO XAMAT. OB HOLDINGS CURRENTLY PLACE TWO TANK BATTALIONS IN THE XAMAT AREA (TWO MORE AT LOC NINH) AND THERE IS RECENT INTELLIGENCE SHOWING RADAR-CONTROLLED 57MM ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS ON THIS ROAD SOUTH OF THIEN NGON AIRFIELD. IT IS ASSUMED THAT FURTHER ASSAULTS FROM THE NORTH OF TAY NINH CITY WILL BE COORDINATED WITH ATTACKS BY THE D-14 OR D-16 BATTALION OR BOTH IN THE TRUONG HOA MARKET AREA ON THE SOUTHEAST EDGE OF TAY NINH CITY AND PROBABLY BY ATTEMPTS TO CUT ROUTE 22 LEADING TO SAIGON.

6. IN THE LARGER FRAME OF THINGS, GENERAL DONG IS CONSCIOUS THAT THE 9TH AND 7TH NVA DIVS ARE YET TO BE COMMITTED AND THAT THE HEAVIEST ATTACKS ARE STILL TO COME. THERE ARE STRONG INDICATIONS THAT THE 7TH DIV WILL STRIKE PHU GIAO IN NORTHEAST BINH DUONG PROVINCE (AT LEAST THE 209TH OR 165TH REGT OR BOTH). THERE IS NO CLEAR INTELLIGENCE INDICATION WHERE THE 9TH DIV MAY ATTACK, BUT ONE STRONG TARGET POSSIBILITY WOULD BE THE SOFT AREA BETWEEN ROUTE 1 AND THE SAIGON RIVER AND BETWEEN TRANG BANG AND HOC MON. THIS AREA, ENCOMPASSING TRANG BANG AND CU CHI DISTRICTS OF HAU NGHIA PROVINCE AND PHU HOA DISTRICT OF BINH DUONG PROVINCE HAS LONG BEEN HEAVILY VC-INFESTED AREAS. STRONG ATTACKS IN THIS AREA WOULD HAVE THE FURTHER OBJECTIVE OF INTERDICTING ROUTE 1 BETWEEN SAIGON AND TAY NINH. THERE ARE AS YET NO STRONG INDICATIONS OF 9TH NVA DIV FORCES SOUTH OF THE SAIGON RIVER. THIS LEAVES OPEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE 9TH MIGHT INSTEAD INITIALLY ATTACK

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TRI TAM (NOT MILITARILY SIGNIFICANT) OR RENEW ATTACKS IN THE BEN CAT-LAI KHE AREA OF WESTERN BINH DUONG, WITH ONLY THE 101ST NVA REGT AND LOCAL FORCE ATTACKING IN THE TRANG BANG/CU CHI AREA.

7. FOUR SIMULTANEOUS SAPPER ATTACKS ON ROUTE 24 BETWEEN CONG THANH DISTRICT TOWN AND DAI AN VILLAGE TO THE NORTHEAST OF BIEN HOA AIR BASE ON THE NIGHT OF DEC 7-8 COULD WELL BE A HARBINGER OF HEAVIER SAPPER ATTACKS IN THE BIEN HOA AREA BY THE 113 SAPPER BATTALION, WHICH IS ALMOST CERTAINLY IN EASTERN CONG THANH DISTRICT. ALL CONCERNED EXPECTED A RESUMPTION OF ROCKET ATTACKS ON BIEN HOA AIR BASE WHICH HAVE NOT OCCURRED SINCE OCTOBER 31.

8. IT SEEMS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT THE HEAVY MILITARY ACTIVITY IN STORE FOR MR3 WILL INCLUDE ATTACKS IN SOUTHERN BIEN HOA AT THE NEW THI THIEN RESETTLEMENT SITE AND IN NHON TRACH DISTRICT WHICH IS ON

THE EASTERN FLANK OF SAIGON. CAPTURED INTELLIGENCE INDICATES THAT THE NVA/VC HAVE SET AN OBJECTIVE OF ESTABLISHING SOME SMALL LIBERATED AREAS IN EXISTING HAMLETS IN NHON TRACH DISTRICT.

9. A MORE SPECULATIVE POSSIBILITY IS COMMUNIST ATTACK ON THE WESTERN FLANK OF HAU NGHIA AND LONG AN PROVINCES. THE NVA/VC FOR MORE THAN A YEAR HAVE DECLARED CONQUEST OF AREAS WEST OF THE VAN CO DONG RIVER IN TAY NINH, HAU NGHIA AND LONG AN TO BE AMONG THEIR MAJOR GOALS. SOME AREAS WEST OF THE RIVER ARE GOOD AGRICULTURE LAND, AND CONQUEST OF "RICE-GROWING LANDS" ARE AMONG DECLARED GOALS FOR THE 1974-75 DRY SEASON. SUBSTANTIAL PARTS OF THE AREA WEST OF THE RIVER ARE UNPOPULATED. THIS WOULD SEEM TO EASE THE POSSIBILITY OF THEIR BEING TAKEN OVER BY THE COMMUNISTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE MR3 COMMANDER AND OTHER SENIOR MR3 OFFICERS HAVE DECLARED CONFIDENTLY THAT THE GVN CAN READILY COPE WITH ANY LARGE-UNIT ATTACKS IN THIS AREA BECAUSE THERE IS NO COVER FOR LARGE FORCES. THE DEPUTY CORPS COMMANDER HAS TOLD ME HE WOULD WELCOME LARGE UNIT NVA/VC ATTACK THERE BECAUSE GVN FORCES COULD INFLICT HEAVY CASUALTIES.

10. THE COMMUNISTS COULD STILL TURN ON A DIVERSIONARY ACTION IN THE HOAI DUC AREA OF BINH TUY PROVINCE WHERE THE 33RD AND 812 NVA REGTS HAVE BEEN IN PLACE FOR SOME TIME READY TO ATTACK TO ISOLATE THE HOAI DUC RICE BOWL AREA. THE WELL-CONCEIVED NVA/VC PLAN, DISCLOSED WHEN A 33RD REGT BATTALION COMMANDER WAS CAPTURED, HAS UNDOUBTEDLY BEEN POSTPONED BY THE TIMELY PLACEMENT OF GVN REINFORCEMENTS IN THE

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TARGET AREAS, AND THE PLAN MAY IN DUE COURSE BE SCRUBBED BY THE COMMUNISTS. GENERAL DONG TOLD ME THIS MORNING, HOWEVER, THAT HE BELIEVES THE COMMUNISTS ARE HOPING THAT HE WILL PULL HIS REINFORCEMENTS OUT OF THE AREA IN THE NEAR FUTURE, AT WHICH TIME THEY WOULD ATTACK. HE DOES NOT INTEND TO OBLIGE.

11. IN FURTHER SUMMARY, STRONG NVA/VC ACTION IN THE TRANG BANG-CU CHI AREAS ON AND NORTH OF ROUTE 1, AND IN PHU GIAO, AS WELL AS IN TAY NINH PROVINCE, IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN IN THE COMING WEEKS. IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO EXPECT DURING THIS PERIOD FREQUENT SAPPER AND LOCAL FORCE ACTIONS IN THE ENVIRONS OF SAIGON AS WELL AS FREQUENT INTERDICTION OF ROUTE 1/22 BETWEEN SAIGON AND TAY NINH, ROUTE 1 EAST OF BIEN HOA, ROUTE 20 TO DALAT, AND ROUTE 15 TO VUNG TAU. SIGNED PETERS.

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LEHMANN

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